

Senator Meyer, Representative Roy and members of the Environment Committee;

My name is Maureen Griffin and I have been involved in purebred dogs for 38 years. I have owned two AKC Top 10 conformation Rottweilers including a Westminster breed winner and my Karelian Bear Dog was the #1 Rare Breed Dog in the USA for two years in a row. I am also member of the World Dog Press corps. Dogs really are my life and I have traveled to numerous countries to observe various dog breeds and have made six trips to Finland and British Columbia alone just to study the Karelian Bear Dog. In addition, after more than 32 years in the field of Animal Control, I retired on June 1, 2009 from my position as Chief Animal Control Officer for the State of Connecticut so I feel uniquely qualified to comment on SB 274AA and I am opposed to it as it is currently written.

First allow me to state that I do not believe that there is a single person in this room who feels that any dog should live out its life tied to a tree or dog house, neglected and/or abused. Unfortunately, the proponents of this bill in their zeal to prevent this one thing, exhibit a form of tunnel vision that shows either an extreme lack of understanding of reasonable situations in which dogs may be tethered or contained or they just don't care who is affected as long as they get what they want. For example, if I have a bitch in season and need to put her in my kennel during her heat cycle to prevent her from being bred, I would be guilty of confining her in an "unreasonable manner" due to the fact that my kennel runs are 6' X 12' outside connected to a 6' X 4' stall inside. I have an insulated, heated building and could bring her out to another fenced area for exercise but according to this proposed legislation, my 50 pound dog would be confined in an "unreasonable manner".

My neighbor has an older husky type dog that has a pen in the back of their property which appears to be about 12' X 12'. On nice days, she brings him out to a long fixed tether where he has a better view and can watch the world go by. This would become a criminal act on her part unless she stands there with him all day while he is tethered.

There are also many other situations where sledding and hunting dogs are responsibly and safely tethered with proper shelter, water and food and are brought off the tether to be trained, worked or exercised. Many have zip lines which allow a good amount of freedom to exercise out of doors which can result in better grounded dogs with less obsessive compulsive behaviors than one might see in a small active housebound pet required to do no more than dress up in pink baby clothes.

In the video on the website of one of the organizations that is sponsoring this bill, a municipal Animal Control Officer was calling attention to the fact that tethered dogs are

often found to be suffering from malnutrition, severe flea infestation, lack of water and the growth of the collar into the neck.

Not only do I not agree with the impression given that merely tethering a dog results in these other problems, I would submit that CGS 53-247 "Cruelty to Animals" addresses these other conditions and could be used by officers who have a true desire to take action. I have also spoken to other ACOs who are not at all in favor of this drastic law so to imply that there is blanket support by AC simply not true. I saw nothing in this video about enclosed animals to which a good deal of this legislation is directed .

I am also quite puzzled by all of the exemptions for the confinement of a dog. I know that some dogs are boarded long term at commercial kennels and that many dogs are kept for substantial periods of time in rescue facilities but these facilities are exempt. I also know that in some years I procure a kennel license pursuant to Section 22-342 as needed and other years I do not. My facilities do not change but I am exempt if I have the kennel license and not exempt if I license my dogs individually? This seems truly unreasonable if not downright bizarre.

In closing, I think it is important to point out that this is not the first time that this sort of law has been introduced in one form or another and it is fought by sportsmen, ACO's and dog experts. I feel that the reason for this is the complete and utter arrogance on the part of the authors of such bills that they "know better" than some of the very people who make dogs their life's work and joy. In the language of last year's attempt, it was even proposed that Animal Control have the authority to seize any dog found "unreasonably" confined or tethered without even obtaining a warrant!!! As a law enforcement officer, I found that attempted circumvention of our Constitution to be positively frightening.

There are a few very good points in this proposal that could be hammered into something fair and equitable. Instead of the Animal Rights people running roughshod over everyone, I would suggest that an effort be made to include a spectrum of breeders, sportsmen and law enforcement personnel to assist in the construction of a reasonable and enforceable law that would be fair to the responsible dog owner and still alleviate the plight of the sorely neglected, unsocialized dogs who spend their lives on the end of a chain.

Thank you for your time.

Maureen Griffin